

WFWP USA GWPN: The Golden Age of Women in Politics

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On August 22, 2021, a new series was launched by The Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN), a project of WFWP. The title was The Golden Age of Women in Politics. It was a one hour interview with Honorable Joy Garratt, State Representative of New Mexico, and Honorable Christine Ellis, Councilmember of Chandler, Arizona.

Ms. Rhia Luz hosted the event on her Buhay Buhay sa Amerika Channel and began by introducing her co-hosts for the event: Ms. Glenda Lambert, WFWP Southwest Regional Coordinator, and Dr. Linda Nishikawa, WFWP

Western Regional Coordinator.

Glenda introduced each of the women in politics on the panel for the program.

Representative Joy Garrett has served in the New Mexico house of representatives since January 2019, and was a teacher for 28 years. Improving education and addressing the needs of students and families are her top priorities.

Christine Ellis was sworn into the Chandler City Council in January 2021, and is the first black woman ever to serve in the office. She has spent her adult life as a registered nurse and became a successful business owner of several assisted living homes in the East Valley. Her focus as council member are to increase access to higher education, enrich neighborhoods, increase free market solutions, and embrace collective diversity.



Next, Dr. Linda shared that even though for 100 years women have had the right to vote, there is only between 20-30% of representation of women across all levels of government. The goal of this series to share wisdom and to encourage more women to consider politics.

Featured below are several snippets of the interview.

What inspired you to go into the political arena?

Christine: I really felt it was a strong inspiration from God that this was my time. I was in the community for years. There is a place and a time where you feel that it is not enough. I grew up in a political family. I was running away from it with everything I got.

Joy: I was inspired when JFK was elected. At that moment I knew one day I would want to run for office. I was raised to write letters to my representatives about any issue on my mind. I realized that they didn't have my back, but I could have my own back, so I decided to run.

Advice for young ladies who want to become public servants. What would you suggest?

Joy: I invite college and high school students to intern with me. I need volunteers to help read

over bills and make calls. Volunteering is a vital step to cultivate and make your interest flourish. My own interests were rooted in elementary school. I visit elementary schools and talk about what I do.

Christine Ellis: We need people with solutions not complainers. Mind your own business, so you can be successful in your business.

M: Meaningful relationships: being involved

I: I inquire about what's going on. Ask questions

N: No fear. You should not have any fear about going forward.

D: Develop new strategies.

What are the biggest successes that you have had since being in office?

Joy: I am an educator by trade. My biggest accomplishment was the "grow your own teacher act." Many states have a shortage of teachers. A person who has worked with kids for two years can get a scholarship to get a teaching certification. Also I helped pass a bill to bring broadband to all areas of New Mexico.

Christine: I just finished my first year of my first term. I am a collaborator. I am working with the schools for broadband. Really important that the schools get what they need. My background is in mental health. I am very concerned about our homeless population: 85% have mental health issues. Police are not social workers, so I am working on sending a navigator first for mental health issues. I am really proud of the diversity of our council. We need to go into the community and educate and empower them.

What is your experience as women leaders in politics with regards to the glass ceiling in your position?

Christine: I will start since I had to break a really big one. At the end of the day, when I said yes to this - it dawned on me right after - that I was going to be the first black woman to be in this position in a city over 100 years old. How am I going to position myself and live this legacy? The only way I did it was to go within. "Truly who are you?" I asked myself. And it was like "I am who He says that I am. I will be who He says I will be. His Promises are true in my life." Every time I tell myself that I feel stronger from within and it shows in my face. Someone tried to run me off the road one day when I was running. People came after me in different ways and fashion. Every time, I felt I needed to go within. When I went within there was a warrior, a lioness, saying "Get out of my way." That is exactly how I did it. Every time I came back out I was stronger for the better.

Joy: I am the first woman to win my seat. The incoming 2018 class was the first time women made a majority in our statehouse. We have a policy that when we call on someone we say, "Will the gentleman or gentlelady yield the floor." We keep it civil. Some gentlemen would say stuff like will the little lady or will the young lady yield the floor. We had to tell them to please address us respectfully.

The interview concluded with Christine sharing about the struggles currently in her native country of Haiti, where she lived until she was 17, and encouraging us all to keep Haiti in our prayers and hearts, and to help in any way we can.

Concluding remarks

Joy: I want to thank the Women's Federation from around the world. You make a difference. You matter. Every single little thing builds up to positive change. Thank you for making a difference and having me here today.

Christine Ellis: I think now I really have to push through. I have Joy to look up to! I will do my best to follow in her footsteps. We would love to have you come and visit us one day. You will love it here in Chandler. Let's do this again ladies.

The reader can listen to the complete answers and gain more insights by watching the video below:

www.wfwp.us/events/2021/8/22/womens-golden-age-in-politics

Plans are underway for future interviews under the theme The Golden Age of Women in Politics. Stay tuned.